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*Page 1 of 1  
1 Aug in response to  
inquiry preceding Aug  
31 July 1961*

**SUBJECT: "One-man Command" in the New Soviet Party Program**

1. The specific reference in the military portion of the draft Soviet party program to one-man command (yedinonachaliye) as a "most important principle of the structure of the armed forces" does not appear to foreshadow any change in the existing command structure. One-man command has been a leading tenet of Soviet military doctrine since the days of Lenin. Simply defined, it means that a military commander has sole command and bears personal responsibility to the Party and government for the combat readiness of his unit. He is held accountable for military and political training, indoctrination and morale.

2. At various points in Soviet history, political officers assigned to the armed forces have had considerable authority to interfere in the conduct of purely military matters. From the birth of the Soviet state until 1940, they could (and were in fact required to) countersign military orders before they were considered valid. The debacle in Finland in 1940 led to the abandonment of this system. The power of the political officer again increased following Soviet defeats in the early days of World War II, and tapered off as victory drew near. At none of these points, however, was the doctrine of

**CONFIDENTIAL**

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one-man command sacrificed. What has varied has been the authority of political officers to intervene. It slackened considerably during the years when Marshal Zhukov was Minister of Defense. Following his ouster in October 1957, however, political officers began once more to exert their influence, sometimes to a degree irritating to line commanders, and in October 1958, the Communist Party Central Committee issued instructions on one-man command to the various services. These stated, for example: "The key to the successful fulfillment of tasks set before the Navy by the Communist Party and Soviet government lies in further improving party-political work and in strengthening one-man command." At the present time, the complete answerability of the military commander for the conduct of all affairs in his unit is clearly stated in Article 48, Internal Service Regulations of the Soviet Armed Forces (1960).